

## Major as Political Philosopher.

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assuredly not the man to truckle to heresy. He approved of, though owing to his absence in Paris he took no active part in, the sentence which condemned his old pupil Patrick Hamilton to a heretic's death at St Andrews. He denounced the heresy of Luther, and in all essentials of the faith he was a sound Catholic of a reforming disposition. He would fain have reformed the more glaring abuses of the Church from within ; he believed in the efficacy of force in stifling reform from without. We have already seen from the history of other lands what reform from within meant as an expedient for staving off reform from without. Before the counter Reformation in the latter half of the sixteenth century, it was a total failure in every country where it was put to the test of practical application.

Major not only wrote commentaries on Aristotle, Peter Lombard, and the Gospels. He studied history as well as the schoolmen, and his " History of Greater Britain " (that is, of England and Scotland)—the most valuable of his works in the eyes of posterity—shows that he had formed very decided opinions on politics as well as religion. Here again, however, he is not original, though he certainly treats British history with considerable independence. His political views, intercalated into his commentary on St Matthew, and his disputation on the sentences of Lombard, are those of the medieval theorist. Their importance lies, not in their novelty but in their stimulating effects on the minds of some of his students, such as Knox and Buchanan. It seems probable that the great Scottish humanist, who ridiculed Major's scholastic pedantries and subtleties, owed more than he cared to admit to his old master. The constitutionalism of the reformers was, too, substantially that of "the oracle<sup>0</sup> of St Andrews. His views of the inherent rights and powers of the people, and of the responsibility of kings, certainly have a democratic ring about them. The king, he holds, possesses no absolute power over his subjects. He is supreme over each individual, but he is subordinate to the whole. In a word, the king is not above the kingdom, but the kingdom is above the king (*regniti sit supra euni*). The whole free people is the supreme fountain of power, and its power may not be abrogated (*inabrogahiiis*). To the king is granted only a ministerial power. If he usurps